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Contact: Mike Kanarick 802.735.7962

Mayors Applaud Governor, Legislature for Passage of Meaningful TIF Legislation

Reform Will Help Cities and Towns Create Jobs, Grow Property Tax Base, and Make Catalytic Public Investments

Montpelier, VT – The Vermont Mayors Coalition tonight applauded Governor Shumlin and the Vermont State Legislature for their leadership that led to passage of meaningful tax increment financing (TIF) legislation this evening. The mayors also highlighted the important role played by the Vermont Mayors Coalition in working towards passage of TIF reform, noting its ability to better advocate for TIF reform through the municipalities' collaborative efforts.

Creation of the Vermont Mayors Coalition, a group including all eight Vermont mayors, was announced at a January 15, 2013 news conference in the State Capitol's Cedar Creek Room. The Coalition indicated its plan to collaborate on issues of common interest to their cities and towns, setting forth as its highest priority the achievement of meaningful TIF reform. As its first official act, the Coalition released its Legislative Policy Summary for the 2013 legislative session in which it stated: "The Vermont Mayors Coalition recognizes that one of the most significant economic development tools Vermont cities have to help create jobs, grow the property tax base, and make catalytic public investments is Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts."

The eight Vermont Mayors who make up the Coalition include:

- Bill Benton, Vergennes;*
- Liz Gamache, St. Albans;
- John Hollar, Montpelier;
- Thom Lauzon, Barre;
- Chris Louras, Rutland;
- Paul Monette, Newport;
- Mike O'Brien, Winooski; and
- Miro Weinberger, Burlington.

The following mayors offered the following statements about this evening's passage of the TIF legislation:

Barre Mayor Thom Lauzon: "More of Vermont's municipalities are utilizing TIF Districts to attract and encourage tax producing development and expand infrastructure. The TIF program in Vermont, while good, needed clarification and expansion to be even more effective. This was a priority of the Vermont Mayors Coalition during this legislative session. The Vermont Mayors Coalition is pleased to have accomplished our goal and wishes to thank Governor Shumlin and Fred Kenney for their leadership and support, as well as leaders in the House and Senate for keeping the reform process focused and productive. Last, but certainly not least, the VMC thanks the supporting members of the House and Senate for their faith and vision. The VMC is committed to working together to promote good policies and practices that improve the lives of all Vermonters. As mayors charged with keeping Vermont municipalities attractive, affordable, and sustainable, we pledge to honor the trust and support of the preceding individuals and use the TIF program wisely."

Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger: "Four months ago, the newly-created Vermont Mayors Coalition identified TIF districts as one of the most significant economic development tools Vermont cities have to help create jobs, grow the property tax base, and make catalytic public investments. Today, we mayors offer many thanks to Governor Shumlin and his team, and to our legislative leadership and all members of both the Senate and House for their hard work and perseverance that made such meaningful TIF reform a reality. Today's result truly is a win-win for both the State and its cities with TIF districts. We appreciate that the many parties involved in crafting and passing this legislation – from the governor, to Speaker of the House Shap Smith and President Pro Tempore of the Senate John Campbell, to legislative committee chairs Senator Tim Ashe and Representative Janet Ancel and numerous other legislators, to the state auditor, to VEPC, to the VLCT – recognized the value of TIF reform. The Vermont Mayors Coalition looks forward to our continued work together with the Shumlin Administration and the Legislature to accomplish other important legislation for our cities and towns."

St. Albans Mayor Liz Gamache: "The Vermont Mayors Coalition offers a new and strong voice to raise the common issues that Vermont's urban centers face. We appreciate the support of Governor Shumlin and his Administration and the Legislature and their willingness to hear our concerns and to work with us to improve Vermont's TIF program. TIF is a powerful economic development tool that is transforming St. Albans. Healthy cities and downtowns make Vermont stronger, and the recent legislation will help make an even greater impact."

Winooski Mayor Mike O'Brien: "I am pleased that the TIF legislation has passed the Vermont Legislature. This legislation clarifies ambiguities that existed in the original TIF bill. The passage of this legislation is the result of a cooperative effort by the affected municipalities, the Governor's Office, the VLCT, the Auditor's Office, and the Legislature to address the issues reported by the State Auditor in its 2011 and 2012 audits of the four existing TIF districts. We look forward to working with the State through VEPC in the rulemaking process to assure a common understanding moving forward."

*Please note that in March 2013, Bill Benton was elected Mayor of the City of Vergennes, succeeding Mayor Mike Daniels who opted not to run for reelection. Mike Daniels had been the Vergennes Mayor at the time the Vermont Mayors Coalition was created.